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Ipswich, Mass.

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UFO reported Friday

Yet to be identified is an object several local people saw wing over Ipswich at dusk Friday evening.

The unidentified flying object (UFO) is described by Maureen Perkins of 25 Upper River road as conical in shape with a "bluish-green flame at the end. And maybe a yellow shield in front."

Perkins was backing her new Honda out of her son-in-law's driveway (Jamie Fay's) at 7 Fellow's road at precisely 8:14 Friday evening when she saw " a ball of fire heading rapidly over Route 1A in the direction of the Don Bosco property."

In the car with Perkins were Theresa Sullivan, 7 Upper River road, and a friend, Jean Morin of Cambridge.

"I looked hard to the left and it was traveling across Appleton Farms toward Don Bosco," she says.

"I told the others to look and then it was gone."

Perkins says she pinned down the exact time, 8:14, because her new car has a digital clock.

The object passed over the tree tops ("just a football field away") and disappeared, says Perkins.

The women, curious to see more of the object, drove to Don Bosco "looking for evidence."

"There was nothing," says Perkins.

A few miles away, Jack Whittier was bringing his small boat into the Ipswich River. He says it was about 8:15. He'd just watched the sun go down.

"I was coming in over the breakwater at the mouth of the river and was watching the sky," says Whittier, who lives on Waldingfield road.

"From right to left this rocket-type object went across in front of me."

Unlike the women, who are unable to guess the dimensions of the object, Whittier said he estimated it to be about 12 feet long and five to seven feet in diameter.

A neat toy

"It was sort of stubby," he says. "I immediately thought 'some kid has a great toy.' But it was going too fast."

Whittier, an engineer at Xenergy in Burlington and chairman of the town's Energy Advisory Committee, says the object was a dark silver color "with a bluish-green flame at the rear — like a bunsen burner flame."

"It went up Fox Creek toward Essex," he says. "It stopped abruptly and then went straight up into the air and disappeared."

Perkins and Sullivan estimate the length of time they saw the object at about five to ten seconds. Whittier said it lasted no more than five seconds.

"I subsequently went up the river and saw people on the Little Neck dock," says Whittier. "They'd seen it too and said they'd have to sell their house if those "things were going to fly over Ipswich."

Whittier doesn't know the names of the people at the Neck but he says they were a young couple and five-year-old child.

His curiosity peaked, Whittier says he called the Air Force Antenna Station on Great Neck to report what he saw. He did not call the Ipswich police. But he did try to reach UFO expert, Raymond Fowler of Wenham several times this week. (The Chronicle also repeatedly tried to reach Fowler but no one answered the telephone at his Wenham observatory.)

Skeptical about what he saw, Whittier says he tends to "believe it was some sort of Air Force stuff. I remain healthily skeptical it was a UFO," he says, "but sitting there watching it, I got a little tingly. I never saw anything like it before."

Theresa Sullivan wonders if the object was a meteor. But she says she's talked to several people who say meteors don't behave that way.

"Or maybe it was a satellite that burned out," she guesses. "I don't really know."

Was she frightened when she saw it?

"Not a bit," says Sullivan, adding she could see no engines and no people aboard the object.

Police clerk Joyce Gysan says no one reported the incident to the Police Department.

Brenda Sheldon of the Air Force Solar Observatory on Sagamore Hill, Hamilton says that place closed up at 7:45 p.m. Friday and even if it had been open, it does not have equipment to track UFO's.

"We track the sun," says Sgt. Sullivan.

And Bill Mavroides, a physicist with the Antenna Station on Great Neck, says no one was at the station Friday evening. Apart from the call from Whittier, Mavroides says he's heard nothing else about the UFO.

"We have no way of tracking it," he says.

Could it have been an Air Force object?

Mavroides doesn't know. And he says, even if it was, the Air Force wouldn't tell him about it.